

M I N N E S O T A

# EDUCATOR

APRIL/MAY 2023



**More than 100  
members bring their  
voices to the Legislature**

**Dashboard can help push  
funding needs message**



**THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL  
EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS**

# ***NEA classes now available on MEA Online!***

**Our MEA Online has teamed up with the National Education Association to provide a multitude of online courses for Education Minnesota members.**

MEA Online now includes online classes provided by Education Minnesota's Minnesota Educator Academy, along with all NEA online classes.

Existing users will need to go to <https://meaonline.learnupon.com/users/password/new> and follow the prompts to reset your password.

To access the NEA portal for new classes, go to portal switch button at the top of the page and click "PEP – Professional Excellence Portal." Members will have to take the very short mandatory welcome to NEA training before seeing the full free catalog of courses.

Can't access the portal switcher to find NEA courses?

The portal switcher is available to users who have accounts in two or more portals. If you are in the MEA Online portal and don't have the switcher button, it means you haven't yet registered in the any other portal, like NEA's Professional Excellence Portal (PEP). If this is you, please go to the PEP registration page and register with the same email and password you use to access MEA Online.

All of the information to access the platform and courses will be available on the Education Minnesota and MEA Online websites.

All MEA Online courses are done asynchronously, at every individual's own pace. The site also saves your progress, and automatically awards CEUs to your account and to your email upon each course completion.

**The best part? These courses are FREE to active Education Minnesota members.**





**THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL  
EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS**

#### April/May 2023 – Volume 25, No. 5

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The Minnesota Educator is published for members to share news about education issues and training opportunities for educators as well as union and political news that affects public education in Minnesota.

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## Now is the time to bargain the contracts we deserve

The negotiations for our new contracts this spring are the chance to complete the work that started a year ago when so many of us campaigned to elect the first pro-education majorities to lead state government in a decade. We cannot let this almost once-in-a-generation opportunity get away.

As I write this, Gov. Tim Walz and the leaders of the House and Senate are planning a multi-billion-dollar increase in spending on education from preschool to college. But it won't matter if we don't get our contracts right this spring.

If we accept status quo contracts, it won't matter.

If we allow punishing working conditions to continue, it won't matter.

If don't retain today's educators and recruit tomorrow's, it won't matter.

We must come together to negotiate contracts that improve lives and change the trajectory of our profession.

Educators are stretched too thin to do our jobs. We cannot give the time and care our students need when classrooms are overcrowded and understaffed with education support professionals.

We cannot provide a well-rounded education when there aren't enough educators to offer band, art, technical education and the other classes that bring joy and meaning to so many students.

It breaks our hearts to see students with obvious mental health needs unable to access overwhelmed and under-resourced mental health teams.

We're losing too many promising young educators who can't pay their bills on a district paycheck and we're preventing too many veterans from retiring on their own terms because of an unfair and insufficient pension system.

Now is the time to express our collective power at the bargaining table to make life-changing improvements in the lives of educators and students.

Now is the time to express our collective power at the bargaining table to make life-changing improvements in the lives of educators and students. Our union is here

with its resources and expertise to help you make it happen.

We can't change 12-percent inflation in the past two years, but we can negotiate for more than 2% and 2% contracts this year.

It is a fact that the state's per-pupil spending is down 20 percent in 20 years after inflation, but in 2023 we can influence how the new money will rebuild our worksites.

Nearly four of every 10 Minnesotans with a teaching license aren't teaching anymore - but we can change the trend.

This is a bargaining season to be bold, to know our worth, to demand respect, to use all our skills, to harness the power of collective action and to win the contracts we deserve.

While the Legislature is still in session, it is too soon to accept at face value administrators who say there's no money.

As bargaining season begins in earnest, Education Minnesota locals can grow stronger together by promising to hold one another accountable. Do not settle too quickly or for less than you're worth because it will hurt every local still negotiating. The first 50 settlements this year will set the bar for every other local.

And most of all, do come together as educators from across worksites and regions to bargain for contracts that reflect the urgency of the moment and the commitment of our elected officials in the value of public education and the people who deliver it.

Now is the time to demand the best contract you've ever ratified.

Together,



Twitter: @DeniseSpecht



Denise Specht

## New Jewish educators affinity group

Are you an Education Minnesota member who identifies with the Jewish religion? Are you looking for a safe space with your Jewish peers to share unique experiences, celebrate the culture and brainstorm ideas to counter the rise of antisemitism within our schools? If these ideas resonate with you, please consider joining our NEW Jewish Educators Affinity Group.

The group is hosting a post-Passover pizza party on April 13 in Minnetonka.

Together, we plan to grow and design this new Jewish affinity space within our larger Education Minnesota community. Contact Melissa DelRosario at [melissa.delrosario@edmn.org](mailto:melissa.delrosario@edmn.org) to join this group and to receive more information about the group or the April 13 event.

## Getting social!

Educators use social media as a way to connect with their communities, colleagues and the world. We will feature posts from Education Minnesota members and locals each issue! Make sure to follow Education Minnesota on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube and Pinterest!



## Where are you reading your Minnesota Educator?



### Congratulations, Jodi Mehus of Spring Grove, for being this issue's winning submission!

We love seeing all of the places where you are reading your Minnesota Educator!

Email a photo to [educator@edmn.org](mailto:educator@edmn.org) or share it on social media using #mneducator of where you are reading your Minnesota Educator to be entered into a drawing to win a \$50 Target gift card! Submissions are due May 3. Happy reading!

## Educators in the news!

Education Minnesota members are often interviewed in their local newspapers or TV station. We will feature a quote each issue!

“

**We don't have a magic wand to make it all better but we should find out what is in our control to give the kids skills that are going to help them in the future.**

”

– Keela Kuhlert, a St. Paul Federation of Educators member and school counselor, in an MPR story “How to help kids and teens with their mental health, students weigh in” which aired March 1. Kuhlert and other mental health professionals spoke about how can K-12 schools and parents increase mental wellness in their kids and their communities.



More than 100 Education Minnesota members have testified in more than 50 hearings on education- and labor union-related bills so far at the Legislature.

## Education bills moving as Legislature works at quick pace

The pro-public education and union majorities elected last fall are working hard on moving a large amount of education and labor bills already this session.

More than 20 education and labor bills that Education Minnesota has supported have been introduced and are moving through committees. More than 100 Education Minnesota members have testified in support of these bills either in person or virtually. There have been more than 50 hearings on these bills.

### What happens next?

As of press time, the first deadline, which requires all bills to be approved by at least one committee, already has passed. The next deadline of March 24 means that bills must be passed out of the relevant committees in the opposite legislative body (e.g. House or Senate) by March 24 to remain viable for the remainder of the session. By the third and final deadline on April 4, committees will have passed their major budget bills.

That means that by early April, we will have a clear picture of legislative leaders' plans for the education budget for the next two years.

### Has anything passed yet related to education?

Yes! As of press time, one education-related bill has been signed into law. HF5 (Jordan)/SF123 (Gustafson) was signed by Gov. Tim Walz on March 17. Next year, the students and families that we serve will not have to deal with lunch debt. In fact, every kid in Minnesota will go to school knowing that they can get breakfast and lunch when they need it. We know hungry kids can't learn, and this will solve a massive headache for staff that have to chase down families to pay bills.

## Stay informed!

Education Minnesota members can look for the latest news on what is happening at the Legislature in the weekly Capitol Connection email. Follow Education Minnesota on social media for the latest news and to see which members are testifying on which bills.

## What are the education and union issues being discussed?

Education Minnesota has been working with our members, as well as in coalition with other labor unions and community groups, to advocate for numerous issues.

- Per-pupil formula increases.
- ESP Bill of Rights, which would provide financial and professional support for education support professionals. Read more about that bill on page 8.
- Pension reform, including bills in support of the Education Minnesota Pension Task Force recommendations. Read more about our pension advocacy work on page 9.
- Funding the special education and English learner cross subsidies.
- Health care affordability, including support for locals who are in PEIP.
- Negotiated class size limits.
- Dedicated funding for more student support personnel, such as licensed school nurses, school social workers, school psychologists, school counselors and chemical dependency counselors.
- Funding for more full-service community schools.
- More dedicated prep time.
- Paid special education due process time.
- Expanding bargaining subject matters to include more issues that come up in the classroom and issues like e-learning days.
- Allowing unions more access to member information from districts and more time to meet with members during the day.
- Contract parity for ECFE/ABE teachers.
- Allowing Tier 1 teachers to join the bargaining unit.
- Access to unemployment insurance for hourly school workers.
- Dedicated training for paraprofessionals who work with special education students.
- Requiring teachers to have completed a teacher prep program before receiving a Tier 2 license.
- Increased teacher voice on the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board.
- Providing comprehensive services to a school identified as in need of comprehensive support under the Every Student Succeeds Act, in hopes of closing the achievement gap.
- Property tax equalization to help districts decrease their reliance on levy elections.
- Better support for teacher candidates, including a teacher residency grant program.
- Properly funding the Public Employee Relations Board to ensure the board can support the state's unions.
- Designating a student loan advocate to provide timely assistance to borrowers.
- Transportation support for students attending area learning centers.
- Requiring licensure for Pre-K teachers.



*Educators like Minnesota Teacher of the Year Sarah Lancaster (left) and Bloomington Paraprofessionals President Bill Schwandt (right) are bringing their voices to the Capitol in support of bills that would impact educators, students and schools.*





*Josiah Hill spent many years in political work as a member of Education Minnesota's Political Action Committee, which sets the course for the union's electoral programs and endorsements. Hill is pictured here in 2018 after the PAC endorsed then-candidates Tim Walz and Peggy Flanagan.*

## Educator, union leader Josiah Hill serves on education, labor committees in first term as a state representative

Long-time educator and local union leader Josiah Hill from Stillwater was elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives for District 33B in 2022. In his new role, Rep. Hill is serving as the vice chair of the Education Policy Committee, and he also serves on the Labor and Industry and Education Finance committees. Hill began teaching in Stillwater in 2005, and in 2010 became president of the 540-member St. Croix Education Association. He now serves as an assistant principal in the district. Hill also has taught as an adjunct professor at The College of St. Scholastica's St. Paul campus instructing students seeking licensure in K-12 education. Why is having educators serving on education and labor committees important? Having people who know what it is like to be an educator and a union leader means they know what to prioritize to get students, educators and schools what they need. Having that lens when making decisions, discussing bills and voting

on them is important to moving legislation that best benefits our schools, educators and students.

The Minnesota Educator connected with Rep. Hill for a few questions so Education Minnesota members can get to know him and what to expect from his leadership this session.

### Why did you run for office?

As a father and a 25-year educator, I ran for our kids and the next generation. In particular, I wanted to see our schools fully funded after seeing a decline in what we're able to do for students and families throughout my career. That was a key motivator. Also, as the father of three young girls, I wanted to ensure that their rights were protected, and make sure that we care for our environment as well.



## What did you notice about underfunding in schools?

I can remember walking into my first teaching job, almost 25 years ago, and a colleague told me that they were shocked that class sizes had finally surpassed 25 students in a classroom. And as I watched them balloon up to 35 in other places, I knew that this wasn't sustainable. I've seen the burnout. I've seen the challenges that unmanageable class sizes put on our teachers. Where I teach, in Stillwater Area High School, a full teaching load is serving between 180-190 students. The desire to provide quality education for every last one of them, to meet every student where they're at, and to help them grow, learn and develop, is something that's in the heart of every educator. We need to make sure we have the tools to achieve that important goal.

## What solutions do you support this year to solve the crises in our schools?

Funding is a big part of that, but policy matters too. Number one, we need to make sure that we attract, train, hire, develop, empower and retain the next generation of teachers and educators. We need to support our support staff by making sure that everyone in our education system has a livable wage and access to health care. We need to make sure that we have a more representative group of teachers in the classrooms serving our kids. I'm really excited about the host of bills that we're seeing aimed at improving conditions for our employees. I'm also excited about our efforts to grow the population of teachers of color, and the investments we're making toward healing disparities.

## What's been the biggest challenge in advocating for these issues?

It's quite a moment to be elected, and we have incredible opportunities to move things forward. I think the challenges are ensuring folks that our motivations are pure, and that this is about the future generations of Minnesota, making sure that they have what they need to have a world-class educational experience.



*Josiah Hill has been in education for 25 years, both as a teacher and now administrator in Stillwater and as a local union president for the St. Croix Education Association. (Photo courtesy of Stillwater Public Schools)*

## Do you have any advice for Education Minnesota members in how to interact with the Legislature?

Absolutely. What was the old Nike ad campaign? "Just do it." Reach out, start a conversation and tell your story. You and only you are the educational experts. You are the ones that do it every day. Your stories matter and have great impact. Beyond that, I would like to see more educators lean in and get involved politically. Start locally. Attend school board meetings. Take a board member out for coffee and tell them what's going on. Making sure that you never miss an election, making sure that you understand the issues, making sure that you support candidates that are going to do right by our kids. Don't ever think for a second that your opinions don't count. I cringe and tear up when I hear people say "I'm only a fill-in-the-blank teacher" or paraprofessional. Don't ever adopt that approach. Your voice is key, it matters and we need it here at the Legislature to be able to do right by our kids.



*Rep. Josiah Hill took office this January after 25 years in education and as a union leader. He is currently serving on the labor and both education committees in the House. (Photo courtesy of Rep. Hill)*

## ESP Bill of Rights introduced again to support hourly workers

Education Minnesota and other education labor unions are once again putting a focus on legislation that would better support education support professionals in their careers.

The ESP Bill of Rights has been introduced in previous sessions and has been reintroduced this year.

Authored by Rep. Brad Tabke in the House and Dr. Alice Mann in the Senate, HF 1348/SF 1318 have had multiple hearings in committees, as of press time.

The proposal:

- Increases the minimum starting salary of hourly school workers to \$25 an hour.
- Guarantees two days of paid training for all support personnel who work with students.
- Gives special education staff built-in due process time to manage their students' individual plans.
- Expands access and increases affordability of hourly school workers' health care, including covering them between school years.
- Sustains pay during e-learning days.

Jessica Gleason, a paraprofessional in Robbinsdale, testified in support of the bill when it was presented in the House Education Policy committee March 1.

"You've probably met more of these ESPs than you realize," she said. "Because they are your cashiers in the retail stores where you shop, they are behind the service desks at community facilities in your town. They are working 18-hour days to make ends meet, picking up Friday night server shifts after finishing their work day at school, just to wake up on Saturday morning to work another 10-hour shift when they should be decompressing. How long will they stay?"



*Minneapolis education support professionals and teachers joined Hastings food staff workers from SEIU and Rep. Brad Tabke at a recent press conference about the importance of the ESP Bill of Rights. The video of the press conference can be found on Education Minnesota's Facebook page.*

"I am seeing an historically high number of open ESP positions in the district and the toll it puts on those that choose to stay. ESPs that are tackling a double/triple workload will continue to leave. ESPs that are working second and third jobs to survive will continue to leave. The issues in recruitment and retention due to low wages and increased insurance costs will continue to trickle down to the quality of our students' education and that's why you need to act now."

Catina Taylor, the ESP chapter president of the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers and Education Support Professionals, has testified in support of the bill and spoke at a press conference with other educators and Rep. Tabke on March 7. The video of the press conference can be found on Education Minnesota's Facebook page.

Taylor said that for ESPs, this is their chosen profession, and one job should be enough for these important professionals in our schools.

"Low pay and uncertainty of summer employment are forcing many ESPs to leave the profession," said Taylor. "Having a starting wage of \$25, access to unemployment in the summer and access to affordable health care — that shouldn't be too much to ask for. School staffing shortages are at an all-time high and we need to move quickly and swiftly to make sure we can recruit and retain the school staff our students need."

**Sign on to support  
the ESP Bill of Rights at  
[edmn.me/espbillofrights](http://edmn.me/espbillofrights)**

## Pension legislation moving through committees, TRA Board election voting open until April 21

Education Minnesota continues its work on pension improvements this legislative session as it always has. Legislation has been introduced and debate has begun, members across the state are engaging in their local and state advocacy plans to get legislative support and Education Minnesota staff have been meeting with legislators and the governor regularly and continue to push them to increase their support for educator pensions.

### Pension legislation

As of press time, the first bill on pension reform has been introduced at the Minnesota Legislature. Senate File 1938 and House File 2222 were introduced in order to improve the pension benefits of Minnesota educators. This bill was developed from the Education Minnesota Pension Task Force recommendations. Numerous educators testified at the first hearing of the bill.

HF 2222/SF 1938 bill components:

- Normal Retirement Age (NRA) of 62 years or 35 years of service credit threshold years for TRA and SPTRFA: This would lower the Normal Retirement Age, as well as create a level of service credit. This would mean when either is attained the member would be provided an unreduced benefit.
- COVID additional service credit for any school employees in PERA, MSRS, STPRFA and TRA: The bill would double service credits earned in years 2020, 2021 and 2022. This makes it more affordable for school employees to retire earlier if they choose and recognizes the difficult, essential and vital work that took place during the pandemic.
- Adjustable COLA from 1-3% in TRA: Tying post-retirement adjustments to inflation rates would provide a benefit that better keeps up with actual increases in costs of living.
- Restoration of Augmentation in TRA: For those who have deferred benefits, it would provide an appropriate balance between the increase in the investment contributions of members and the value of the benefit when inflation deteriorates its value.

### New online resources available on our pension webpage

Education Minnesota members can access numerous resources on the pensions page on our website, [www.educationminnesota.org/advocacy/at-the-legislature/pensions](http://www.educationminnesota.org/advocacy/at-the-legislature/pensions). This includes many new items!

- *This online version of our 2022-23 Pension Advocacy Plan presentation is in three parts and covers our advocacy leading up to this year, pension plan essentials and current advocacy plan organizing and actions.*
- *Materials to host a 10-minute meeting to organize in your local around the Pension Advocacy Plan are available, including an agenda, slideshow and handout.*

As of press time, the TRA legislative proposal was set to be introduced. This bill will be used as the “vehicle” bill for end-of-session negotiations. This means the bill with the TRA components will be used as a starting point for discussions, and will be amended as legislators make their final decisions. As we’ve mentioned in the past, any pension improvements are highly dependent on the budget target given to the LCPR.

### TRA elections

The Minnesota Teachers Retirement Association is holding an election to fill two seats on its Board of Trustees. Six Education Minnesota members are running, and Education Minnesota has created a voters guide and hosted a Q&A session with the candidates which is recorded. Both are available on our pensions webpage. Active TRA members should have received their ballots in mid-March and have until April 21 to vote. The results will be certified by the TRA Board in June and shared on their website, [www.minnesotatra.org](http://www.minnesotatra.org).



## Education Minnesota upcoming governance elections, candidate statements

At the 2023 Representative Convention, delegates who reside in each Education Minnesota Governing Board Zone will have the opportunity to elect their at-large representative to the board for a three-year term. Last fall, filing forms were included in the Minnesota Educator magazine, inviting members to put their name in to be considered for at-large seats as well as statewide seats for education support professionals and higher education/statewide affiliate seats. Also open was filing for a director to the National Education Association Board of Directors. Many races only had one candidate and those members were elected by acclamation and approved by the current governing board.

Education Minnesota is governed by an elected board, made up of a member from each of the union's 26 election districts, eight election zones and three at-large positions. Our governing board meets throughout the year to set dues, adopt a budget and carry out directives passed at the annual meeting. As a top

decision-making body, the NEA Board of Directors includes at least one director from each state affiliate, as well as representatives from retired members, aspiring educators, at-large representatives of ethnic minorities, administrators, teachers in higher education and active members employed in ESP positions.

All candidates had the opportunity to submit a statement and/or photograph. These statements and photos appear here in the Minnesota Educator and on the Education Minnesota website. Members may view the statements online by going to [www.educationminnesota.org](http://www.educationminnesota.org), signing into the member portal and then clicking on the Elections tab.

*Education Minnesota members should also watch for local elections taking place in their local union and zone for members wanting to be delegates to the NEA's Representative Assembly.*

### Governing Board At-Large Zone 5



Michelle Gottberg

#### **Michelle Gottberg**

*United South Central-Educational Support Professionals*

Serving on the Governing Board this short time, I have learned so much. If re-elected I will encourage innovative ideas and forward-thinking so that our union can positively impact and support members and to do the best work, I can do to help the most people possible.



Matthew Wilmes

#### **Matthew Wilmes**

*Education Minnesota-Lewiston-Altura*

I listen, I learn, and then I lead. As an elected local and IO leader, I will continue representing our members, asking challenging questions, and engaging in crucial conversations. I'm involved at every level, from local and IO President to state-funded delegate at AFT and NEA conventions.

## Governing Board At-Large Zone 7



Katrina Geske

### **Katrina Geske**

*North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale Education Association*

If elected to the EM Governing Board, I will advocate for our students and our profession using a racial and social equity lens. This includes advocating for fully funded schools across the state. All students in Minnesota deserve a high-quality education, regardless of their zip code.



Glazell Toledo

### **Glazell Toledo**

*Education Minnesota-Intermediate School District 287 Local 2209*

I am running in hopes helping the voices of those who do not feel strong enough to stand be heard as well as offer perspectives that have not been well represented. In an ideal world, there would be no need to worry about equity. This is not an ideal world.

In solidarity,  
Glazell Toledo

## Education Minnesota approaches 25-year anniversary

Sept. 1, 2023, will mark 25 years since Education Minnesota was formed. The Representative Convention this April serves as the kickoff to the celebration of our union's 25 years of unity.

### Did you know we were the first merged state affiliate?

The merger brought together the Minnesota Education Association (MEA) and Minnesota Federation of Teachers (MFT) in what was the first merged union in the country to be recognized by both the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association. There had been previous mergers before, but ours was a recognized, accepted merger by both national unions.

### Why merger?

The Public Employees Labor Relations Act (PELRA) started what would be catalyst for the fighting between the MEA and MFT to be the exclusive representative for an individual school district's employees.

Before the merger, the two organizations—the MEA and the MFT—were both doing the same things, but just a little differently. But because there were two groups, that inherently created a world of competition, fighting among colleagues, smear campaigns in publications and a division that really served no purpose.

"In districts where there were both representatives of the EA and the FT, elections took place to determine who had the majority of support," said Larry Wicks, the former executive director of the MEA and Education Minnesota. "Whoever won the election, they became certified as the exclusive representation. That began the codified fighting of the EA and the FT."

The fighting also moved to the state level. Politicians and decision makers in education were able to use the two organizations as bargaining chips and try to make them take different positions.

"We were doing things or making decisions based on what we thought the other organization would or wouldn't do," said Judy Schaubach, former MEA and Education Minnesota president. "Whether it was in the political arena or at the local level, in the back of our



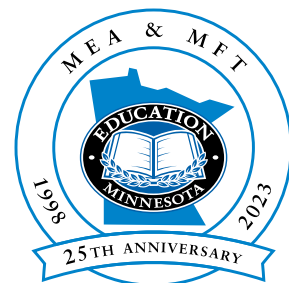
minds, we were always thinking, if we take this position are we going to lose members to the other organization because they will take a different position?"

The push for merger really started at the local level. Rank-and-file members were tired of the fighting and didn't see a real reason for there to be two separate unions. The first merger came in the Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan district. In total, thirteen local unions merged before the state organization. This indeed was a member-led process.

### Let's celebrate!

Education Minnesota will kick off the 25th anniversary with a celebration at April's Representative Convention. Delegates will be able to share their own merger memories or thoughts on how we are more powerful as a united union. There will also be reflections shared from the leaders who were involved in this historic event.

As the September anniversary approaches, look for ways to celebrate this momentous occasion in future issues of the Minnesota Educator and on Education Minnesota's social media channels.





## Underfunding dashboard available for members, public to see the funding needs of schools in certain areas

Education Minnesota has used the term “full funding” as it relates to what our schools need and the union often gets asked, “what does full funding mean?”

Fully funded schools mean fully prepared students. A fully funded school is a place where all students and educators—no matter what they look like or where they come from—have what they need to be successful in their teaching and learning. This looks different in every place, but how we get there is the same. We need lawmakers to put students first and provide our schools with the sustainable, equitable and sufficient funding our children deserve.

To help with the funding conversation, Education Minnesota has developed a dashboard to show three areas where our districts need resources. Education Minnesota knows this does not show everything and we recognize the data is only as good as the data we are able to get from the state and other sources

The dashboard looks at:

1. Equity measures: What investment is needed to adequately support racial equity, special education students and English learners?
2. Staffing: How much investment does a district need to ensure that students have access to licensed counselors, nurses, social workers and psychologists?
3. The impact of inflation: How much spending power has a district lost over time and how much have our local communities been asked to raise in local tax dollars to keep operating their schools?

The areas highlighted on the dashboard are ONLY a few areas Minnesota must address to start the long process of building fully funded schools worthy of all students, regardless of race or address.

The data points are a snapshot of a few critical areas. What we do know is every school district in Minnesota is both underfunded and understaffed in some way.

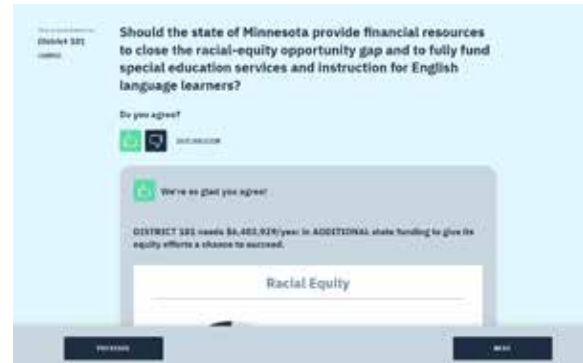
**Go to [dashboard.believeinwemn.com](https://dashboard.believeinwemn.com) to see your district's data!**

### How do I use it?

Once on the page, you will enter in the school district number or city that you want to view. Then you will go through three values-based questions to demonstrate why these data points are important to student success.

The questions are:

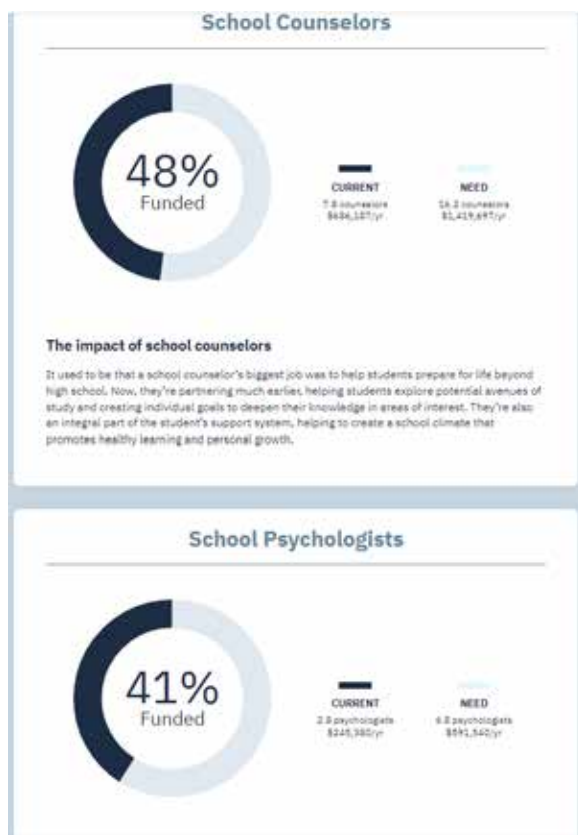
- Should the state of Minnesota provide financial resources to close the racial equity opportunity gap and to fully fund special education services and instruction for English language learners?
- Should schools provide the nurses, counselors, psychologists and social workers that our students need to get timely help?
- Should school funding in Minnesota be equitable and sufficient across the whole state, so that all students—no matter what they look like or where they come from—have what they need to succeed?



*The first question lets users of the dashboard know how their district fares for state funding when it comes to racial equity, English learner and special education support. In this image, the Brainerd district, like all others in the state, is underfunded in these areas.*

Users will be asked “Do you agree?” and click either a thumbs up or thumbs down icon. No matter which icon they choose, the same data will show up with either a “We’re so glad you agree!” or “We respect your position. Did you know...” message.

Then users will see how much funding their district needs in that category to meet the suggested threshold, either to have their categories fully funded like SPED or to meet the national ratios like support services staff

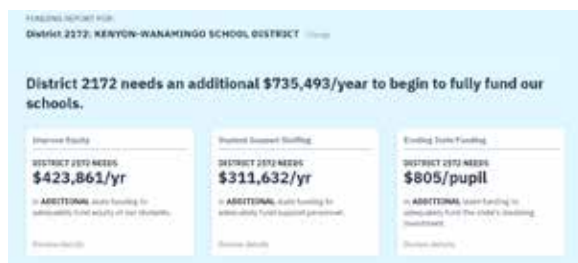


*The need for student mental and physical health staff is great across the state. This image shows how many more staff the Waconia district would need to meet the nationally recommended ratios.*

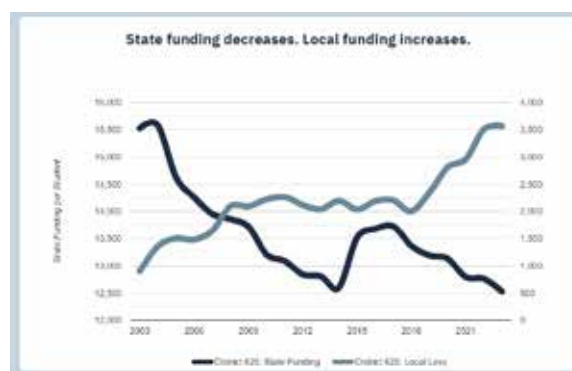
or a graph showing how much local levies have had to cover costs. Users will also see an interactive graph showing at what level their district is currently funded.

Each category also includes a description of why these areas of funding are important to creating an equitable and successful school community.

At the end, the user will get a final "report" card summary of the total dollar amounts needed to fully fund each issue, as well as an opportunity to review the specific details.



*Each district has a funding report at the end of the dashboard that shows how much total investment in these key areas are needed. Shown here is the report for the Kenyon-Wanamingo district.*



*State funding for schools significantly dropped in 2003. In most districts, like St. Paul shown here, the local taxpayers have helped fund schools in the form of levies.*

Users will also have an opportunity to take action, including emailing their legislators to ask them to fully fund public education and sharing out the dashboard on their social media channels.

### Why are there only a few areas shown?

There are the data points that Education Minnesota and the state can track for the 300-plus regular school districts and charter schools. Education Minnesota wanted to be sure that the issues were accessible statewide. Unfortunately, we are not able to represent the data from intermediate districts, coops and ed districts because of their limitations around levying for funding and some of their specific funding categories.

These are also the data points where we can show a direct dollar amount to resolve the underfunding. While we know class size is an important issue for parents, that is difficult to quantify as a firm number at the district level, as it may be one data point in elementary schools and one in middle and high schools and hard to summarize as a total.

These are also data points that we know most Minnesotans can wrap their minds around being important for schools. Each issue includes a summary statement as to why and how underfunding in the area affects students and staff.

Education Minnesota makes sure to reference on the beginning and ending pages that this does not tell a complete story of the lack of funding in our schools, but these are important areas to highlight as a part of the puzzle.

## How did we get/calculate this data?

This data is from both internal and external sources:

For Question One on the racial equity opportunity gap and fully funding special education services and instruction for English language learners: This data comes from the Minnesota Department of Education. It was generated in response to proposals from the State Funding Task Force around racial equity.

Special education and EL data is MDE data on the cross-subsidies that represent underfunding of supports for special education students and multilingual students. This data compares actual spending vs. dedicated revenue for students who participate in special education and English learner programming. These are amounts directly provided and calculated by MDE.

For Question Two on the staffing of nurses, counselors, psychologists and social workers: This data is calculated by Education Minnesota. MDE data is used on the numbers of staff in each district in each position and

calculate the ratio of students to nurses (for example). The FTE needed for districts to have sufficient staff to meet the ratios recommended by the professional associations (the National Association of School Nurses, for example) is calculated. And then the dashboard shows the funding gap. We then determine a total cost associated with the gap by multiplying the number of staff needed by a per-FTE cost number that we generate by looking at the average salary reported for licensed teachers with an additional 30% benefit premium.

For Question Three on the funding levels and inflation adjustments: This data is based on MDE and the calculations are done by an economist with expertise in school finance, Jeff VanWyche, a consultant with Northstar Policy Action. The data takes MDE's per-pupil aid and levy amounts from the most recent forecast and does an inflation-adjustment to determine their value in 2003 dollars. The trend is shown in per-pupil amounts (which we talk about as the per-pupil spending power).

## MONTESSORI CENTER OF MINNESOTA



### AMI 3-6 and 6-12 DIPLOMA COURSE

#### » DEPOSIT FEE WAIVED

for 3-6 applications received in full by June 1.

#### » REFERRAL BONUS

for a limited time, when an individual you refer submits an application to either Diploma Course, their application fee is waived and you get a financial incentive.

## Transforming the Future

Montessori education is a unique and effective way of teaching that emphasizes hands-on, experiential learning in a child-centered environment.

Montessori Center of Minnesota's AMI recognized Diploma Courses prepare trainees to become empowered Montessori educators at the 3-6 and 6-12 levels. Trainees will gain a deep understanding of Montessori philosophy, learn practical teaching techniques, and learn to apply those techniques in their work with children.

### 3-6 Course Instruction Dates

September 6, 2023 - May 23, 2024

### 6-12 Course Instruction Dates

Summer I: June 26 – August 18, 2023

Summer II: June 24 – August 16, 2024

Summer III: June 23 – August 15, 2025

### Questions

For more information please visit [montessoricentermn.org](https://montessoricentermn.org) or contact [kate@mtcm.org](mailto:kate@mtcm.org) or 651.298.1120.

more info





## New TV, digital campaign puts spotlight on key legislative priorities

The latest phase of Education Minnesota's "Believe in We" paid media campaign debuted in March with a series of television and digital ads. The theme of the campaign is "The Time Is Now," and this campaign represents our union's push during the 2023 legislative session for our long-sought-after goals of fully funding education; respecting educators at the beginning, middle and end of their careers with supportive working environments and professional benefits; attracting and retaining the best people in the profession; and giving students—no matter where they live and what their background is—access to the best schools and higher education institutions.

"For our union, this session of the Legislature is about passing the right investments and policies to give educators more time with their students, give students access to more great educators and make sure our schools and colleges are safe and healthy spaces to learn and work," Education Minnesota President Denise Specht said. "This ad campaign is just one way our educators are coming together to demand the respect and tools they need to deliver the education our students deserve."

Specific issues covered in the ads, as described by our members, include:

- Reducing the school staffing crisis by improving compensation for teachers, education support



*Minnesota State College Faculty member Ayesha Shariff shared her thoughts on increasing access to higher education in her ad.*

### Why an ad campaign?

A public voice for educators is essential. To help publicize the efforts of the union and its members, in 2006, Education Minnesota launched statewide paid advertising campaigns. It has produced TV ads, online banner ads, online videos, social media posts and sponsorships. The impact of the media campaign has been clear. Public and member polling has consistently shown increased support for Minnesota's public schools and Education Minnesota's mission.

professionals and other educators. This also means improving pensions for all educators.

- Ensuring every student has access to a team of licensed, school-based mental and physical health professionals.
- Attracting and retaining more educators of color to meet the needs of the state's increasingly diverse students and preparing all students to thrive after high school.
- Paying for the soaring costs of special education services.
- Improving access to, and increasing resources for, state colleges.

The ads all feature Education Minnesota members who were identified as those who can speak to the issues, as well as the educators interacting with public school students.

With a historic state budget surplus and newly-elected majorities of pro-education lawmakers in the Minnesota House and Senate and a former teacher in the governor's office, there is a once-in-a-generation chance to invest in our state's greatest resource—our public schools.

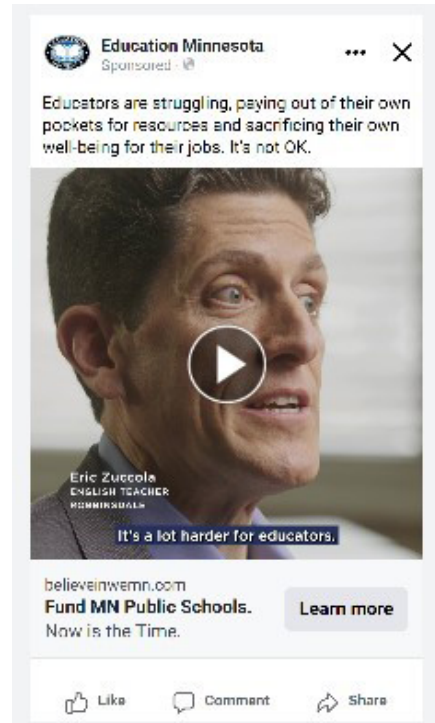


The theme of the campaign is "Now is the time," because with the pro-public education majorities and the state's budget surplus, we need to push more than ever for the investments our schools and students need.

All of the ads call for viewers and readers to contact their legislators and tell them to make these investments in educators and public education. More information and interviews with members are available at the campaign website: [BelieveInWeMN.com](http://BelieveInWeMN.com).

This campaign is set to run for the remainder of the 2023 legislative session. Members and the public will see the ads on social media channels, TV, digital pre-roll ads, and website banner ads.

Robbinsdale teacher Eric Zuccola shares some of the concerns he knows all educators are facing in his ad, seen here as displayed on Facebook.



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## Pregnant or nursing? Know your workplace rights

*THIS INFORMATION WAS SUBMITTED BY THE MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRY. Editor's note: If you believe your employer is not complying with any of the rights discussed in this article, please contact your Education Minnesota field staff for assistance.*

Returning to work after having a baby can be a challenging transition—especially for teachers who lack a traditional work environment.

But did you know you have workplace rights and protections that help you during and after a pregnancy? This includes the right to work safely during a pregnancy and to express milk on paid time when you return to work.

The Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) is here to help workers and employers understand their workplace rights. We've created a webpage with resources such as a brochure and a video to help expectant and new parents know their rights, which can be found at [dli.mn.gov/newparents](http://dli.mn.gov/newparents).

DLI ensures compliance with wage and hour laws and enforces provisions of the state Women's Economic Security Act (WESA), which was passed in 2014 to strengthen workplace protections for women, among other priorities.

WESA provisions include pregnancy accommodations, expressing milk at work and more. Here's an overview of some of the protections under WESA.

If you are pregnant and work for an employer with 15 or more employees, it's your right to request and your employer must provide more frequent restroom, food and water breaks, seating and limits on lifting more than 20 pounds. You do not need a doctor's note to receive these accommodations.

In addition, if you decide to express milk at work, your employer must provide paid break time to express milk in a private area that is in close proximity to the work area and free from intrusion, among other requirements. For many parents, continuing to breastfeed after returning to work can be difficult. The law offers protections for workers to promote breastfeeding among working parents.

Under WESA, an employer cannot reduce an employee's compensation for time taken to express milk. While breaks must, where possible, run concurrently with breaks already provided, including existing unpaid breaks, employers can't reduce an employee's pay or require an employee to make up time used to express milk.

DLI encourages workers and employers to review their workplace rights and responsibilities under the Women's Economic Security Act. Visit [dli.mn.gov/newparents](http://dli.mn.gov/newparents) to review DLI resources for expectant and new parents or contact DLI's Labor Standards at [dli.laborstandards@state.mn.us](mailto:dli.laborstandards@state.mn.us) or 651-284-5075.



# Child labor revelations warrant greater scrutiny and action against employers who break the law

By David Aron, Education Minnesota General Counsel

As much as we would like to believe that child labor no longer exists in our country or our state, that is sadly not the case. In December, a Wisconsin company called Packers Sanitation Services, Inc., agreed to pay a \$1.5 million civil penalty following an investigation by the U.S. Department of Labor into the company's use of minors at meatpacking facilities in eight states, including at JBS Foods in Worthington. According to a recent report by CNN, the company "employed the children to clean meat processing equipment including back saws, brisket saws and head splitters. At least three children were injured."<sup>1</sup>

In late February, The New York Times published a report on similar child labor abuses occurring in over 20 states, including Minnesota.<sup>2</sup> The article details how a wave of unaccompanied minors, mostly from Central America, have found themselves working in our country's most dangerous and physically demanding jobs, often to pay debts to those who helped them reach the U.S. Minnesota-based General Mills is also mentioned because it contracts with Hearthside, a food packaging company found to employ child workers.

It is clear from these upsetting stories that certain companies are willing to exploit the labor of children fleeing desperate circumstances in their home countries

**This Legal Briefs column, written by Education Minnesota attorneys, is one of an occasional series on legal developments that affect educators.**

for profit. It is also clear that we need to be doing more as a state and country to deter these abuses from happening in the first place.

While educators are not at all responsible for the exploitation of migrant children, the New York Times article highlights that their relationships with their students give them knowledge about possible abuses that few others might have. The New York Times article quoted a Miami teacher who said that almost all of the eighth grade students in her classroom carried adult workloads outside of school.

Educators in communities with migrant children can play a role in these efforts by familiarizing themselves with Minnesota's child labor laws<sup>3</sup> and reporting suspected violations to the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry at [dli.laborstandards@state.mn.us](mailto:dli.laborstandards@state.mn.us).

*Important legal guidance: Educators cannot and should not share any information about a specific student (names or other identifying information) to anyone outside the school without a subpoena from law enforcement directed to the school district. However, information about specific employers in your community that may be employing students under the age of 14, or under the age of 16 past 7 p.m. during the school year, can and should be reported to the Minnesota Department of Labor.*

*If you have additional questions or suspicions about child labor law violations or child trafficking that may be occurring in your community, please don't hesitate to contact your Education Minnesota field staff, who can work with our legal department in connecting you or your members to the appropriate authorities.*

<sup>1</sup> Ramishah Maruf, "This company employed children to clean razor-sharp saws using hazardous chemicals" CNN, (Feb. 17, 2023), [https://www.cnn.com/2023/02/17/business/packers-sanitation-child-labor/index.html?j=8098031&sfmc\\_sub=554280616&l=49424\\_HTML&u=175080407&mid=1077892&jb=6](https://www.cnn.com/2023/02/17/business/packers-sanitation-child-labor/index.html?j=8098031&sfmc_sub=554280616&l=49424_HTML&u=175080407&mid=1077892&jb=6)

<sup>2</sup> Hannah Dreier, "Alone and Exploited, Migrant Children Work Brutal Jobs Across the U.S." New York Times, (Feb. 25, 2023), [https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/25/us/unaccompanied-migrant-child-workers-exploitation.html?j=8098031&sfmc\\_sub=554280616&l=49424\\_HTML&u=175080408&mid=1077892&jb=6](https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/25/us/unaccompanied-migrant-child-workers-exploitation.html?j=8098031&sfmc_sub=554280616&l=49424_HTML&u=175080408&mid=1077892&jb=6)

<sup>3</sup> A fact sheet is available online at <https://www.dli.mn.gov/business/employment-practices/age-hours-restrictions>

## Save the date for two exciting opportunities for educators this August

Education Minnesota has two opportunities for members this August – one is brand new, and one is a new take on a classic event.

### Summer Leadership Seminar

Education Minnesota's summer professional development event will now be called the "Summer Leadership Seminar."

Taking place at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, from July 31 to Aug. 2, the 2023 Summer Leadership Seminar will be different from years past. Instead of attendees selecting a variety of short sessions, members will choose one leadership pathway and be with the same group of members throughout the duration of the conference. Each leadership pathway will cover a specific area of content. Some examples are professional development train the trainer, member rights advocacy training or local president's training.

The schedule and offerings are being planned, and registration as well as more information on the new format will be shared with members this spring. Keep an eye on emails, social media and Education Minnesota's website for more information.

### Uplifting our Voices, Values, and Vitality – a Racial and Social Justice Convergence

Members who have participated in Education Minnesota's Racial Equity Advocate program have now created a new space for educator connection and growth entitled "Uplifting our Voices, Values, and Vitality – a Racial and Social Justice Convergence."

The convergence will take place Aug. 4 at the Wellstone Center in St. Paul. The event will look and feel different than other events, centering on interrupting whiteness and creating a space for folks from underinvested communities feel welcome and able to participate and share. The event will be open to all Education Minnesota members who want to connect and talk about social justice unionism and racial justice in our schools, union and communities.

The focus of the event will be on uplifting educators and creating belonging within their union.

Registration as well as more information will be shared with members this spring. Keep an eye on emails, social media and Education Minnesota's website for more information.



# MEMBERS WANT TO KNOW

## *What is Tradition Mortgage?*

Tradition Mortgage is an ESI sponsored program. In today's ever changing housing market, they offer members personalized service, education and consultations, and will help guide you through the entire buying process. Tradition's goal is to be as transparent and comprehensive as possible.

Are you beginning to explore purchasing a home or are you curious about new construction? Educational videos available include:

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Education Minnesota  
41 Sherburne Ave.  
St. Paul, MN 55103

THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL  
EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

# **Save the date!**

# ***Rally for Public Education at the Capitol May 20, 1 p.m.***

Now is the time! Members and supporters of public education will rally at the Minnesota State Capitol May 20 to give a final push to legislators to fully fund public education. The rally begins at 1 p.m., with lunch and sign-making at Education Minnesota headquarters beginning at noon.

Watch for more information on the event on Education Minnesota's website, emails and social media channels!